

NRPSI Ltd
Saxon House
48 Southwark St
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27th February 2012

By email:
Martin Jones
Deputy Director of Crime (Crown)
HM Courts and Tribunals Service
102 Petty France, London SW1H 9AJ

Tel: 0207 403 166

Dear Mr Jones,

Framework Agreement

At our meeting with Louisa and her colleagues last November we discussed among other things the Framework Agreement and the impending start of the contract with ALS. One outcome was that we both indicated that we should keep in touch, especially if there were any issues that could be of joint interest.

Indeed in your letter of 21st December you specifically asked us to keep you informed and offered to meet us to hear about any on-going issues we may have once the new service had been introduced across the MoJ.

The contract has now been in operation for some time and as you will be well aware there would appear to be an increasing number of concerns being expressed and publicised from many quarters. As well as observing what others are experiencing and reporting, we are directly aware from information given to us by our own registrants of the problems many of them are facing and also their perceived view of the very real difficulties being faced by their clients/former clients in the justice sector.

Whilst I am not in a position, nor is it appropriate for me to make any comment on the way in which your contractor ALS is undertaking their responsibilities, it does appear that there are two fundamental issues that are embedded into the Framework Agreement that need tackling to enable the contract and the contractor to successfully achieve the objectives you have set – saving costs and quality service provision, both of which we understand and support.

As to the first the perceived consequence is that interpreters employed through these arrangements are not receiving sufficient payment. It is not for us as the national register to lobby or seek to engage with you on this. There are many relevant and competent interpreter membership based organisations who can, and would very much wish to do so. We can only offer the informed observation that from what we are told the payments offered are in our view woefully inadequate and can only support the pleas made to you by others that ways be found of remedying this.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF PUBLIC SERVICE INTERPRETERS

The second issue is one where we believe NRPSI can very much assist you, and we would welcome the opportunity to explore it with you. It relates to the obvious intent and need to ensure the required level of quality in the provision of interpreting services by a system of vetting against experience and a given level of professional qualifications. This is being undertaken with the new arrangements in a way that, we would suggest, adds more complexity, extra cost for both interpreters and your contractor (and therefore the MoJ and the public purse), and must take up a lot of time and attention of your contractor that could perhaps be more beneficially and effectively devoted to the management of the contract delivery requirements – the provision of interpreters to the courts.

Whilst NRPSI registration is recognised in your arrangements as being a validator of competence you require that to be superseded or added to by another layer of vetting. We would suggest that this is not necessary, especially since the reforming of NRPSI as a separate, independent organisation last April and the high priority we now give to maintaining quality standards.

As explained to Louisa in our discussion we have revised our Code of Conduct with stakeholder involvement (including the Metropolitan Police), updated and resourced our complaint procedures, and are up to date in dealing with the complaints that we receive. Our register of professional, qualified and vetted interpreters covers 101 languages and has risen from 2,180 to over 2,350 since we started in our independent role last April.

We would be pleased to meet you or your colleagues to discuss the current situation with the employment and use of interpreters in the justice sector, and in particular the ways in which a greater recognition and use of the National Register can assist in reducing or eliminating some of the present concerns and difficulties whilst still serving your objectives of cost effectiveness and quality. This could well include adding to or revising the entry and qualification requirements to the register, and enhancing the vetting and monitoring procedures to better match your requirements.

I will be copying this letter to our registrants and others in due course, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



TED SANGSTER
Chairman